

2011-2014 Plan of Action
**Pursuant to the United States - Oman Memorandum of Understanding on
Environmental Cooperation**

The Joint Forum on Environmental Cooperation (“Joint Forum”) established pursuant to the United States - Oman Memorandum of Understanding on Environmental Cooperation, hereby defines a Plan of Action for 2011 through 2014 that establishes specific goals, objectives and areas for cooperation that reflect national priorities for each Government.

Background

The Government of the United States (“United States”) and the Government of the Sultanate of Oman (“Oman”) executed a Memorandum of Understanding on Environmental Cooperation (“MOU”) on February 20, 2006. In so doing, the Governments recognized the importance of protecting the environment while promoting sustainable development in connection with the expanded bilateral trade that is anticipated under the United States - Oman Free Trade Agreement (“FTA”).

Through the MOU, the Governments established the Joint Forum on Environmental Cooperation (“Joint Forum”) with a mandate to: (1) develop a Plan of Action that identifies priority projects for environmental cooperation and to update said Plan as appropriate, in light of changing circumstances; (2) review and assess cooperative environmental activities undertaken pursuant to the Plan of Action; (3) recommend ways to improve cooperation; and (4) undertake such other activities as the Governments may deem to be appropriate.

Plan of Action Goals

Through implementation of this Plan of Action, the Joint Forum seeks to achieve the following long-term goals:

- Effective implementation of the Environment Chapter of the FTA, including with respect to obligations to: (1) ensure that environmental laws provide for high levels of environmental protection, and strive to continue to improve those laws; and (2) not fail to effectively enforce such environmental laws;
- Protection and conservation of the environment, including natural resources, and promotion of sustainable development; and

- Public participation in environmental issues.

Priority Areas for Cooperation

The Joint Forum establishes the following priority areas for cooperation with corresponding objectives. These priority areas reflect the “Selected Areas for Environmental Cooperation” listed in the Annex to the MOU (see MOU, Section 3 Paragraph 1).

1. STRENGTHENING ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS, INCLUDING NATURAL RESOURCE-RELATED LAWS

Objectives: (a) To strengthen the capacity to develop, update, implement and enforce environmental laws and regulations; (b) To exchange information and experiences on environmental (including natural resource-related), legal, and regulatory regimes; enforcement and compliance policies; tools and practices; and approaches to environmental protection and natural resource management.

2. DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Objectives: To support disaster preparedness through trainings and sharing experiences in the review and preparation of contingency mechanisms for oil spills, cyclones and other disasters.

3. BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AND IMPROVED MANAGEMENT OF PROTECTED AREAS, AND OTHER ECOLOGICALLY IMPORTANT ECOSYSTEMS

Objectives: Work with national, regional, and local governments and civil society in Oman (a) To promote and encourage the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and all of its components and levels, including plants, animals, and habitats; (b) To improve management of protected areas and other ecologically important ecosystems through, among other things, market-based mechanisms; and (c) To conserve and safeguard other important natural resources.

4. CLEANER PRODUCTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL TECHNOLOGY

Objectives: To develop and strengthen the Ministry capacity with activities such as: (a) development of an electronic database on environmentally safe, cleaner production practices and techniques available in the world; (b) Preparation of a draft for environmental laws and regulations; and (c) Training of Ministry personnel to specialize in this field.

5. ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Objectives: (a) To share experiences on involving the public in environmental matters; (b) To promote the development of opportunities for public participation in environmental protection efforts, and improve public access to information and access to justice on environmental issues; (c) To exchange knowledge and experiences regarding environmental education strategies and programs, with a principal focus on basic and community-level education.

Activities

More specific activities that the Governments will consider to undertake jointly within each priority area are listed in the following matrix. The Joint Forum will set implementation priorities from within the activities listed in the matrix, and understand that it is unlikely that all of these activities will be undertaken. The Joint Forum will periodically re-evaluate the priorities in the matrix to ensure that available resources are applied to projects of highest mutual interest. The list of activities is inclusive. The implementation of activities is contingent upon the availability of funding and other resources from the Governments and other sources.

Plan of Action Priority Areas

Priority Area	Sub-area	Sub-activities/Details
1. Strengthening environmental laws, including natural resource-related laws	Strengthening the capabilities of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs	Legislation - Update the law on Protecting the Environment and Preventing Pollution, the Regulations on Controlling Air Pollutants Emitted by Immobile Sources, and other such laws and regulations

Priority Area	Sub-area	Sub-activities/Details
		Environmental Strategy - Update certain Environmental Strategies and Work Plans
		Joint Seminars - Hold technical-level joint environmental seminars on topics such as assessing environmental impacts, climatic changes, and waste management.
2. Disaster Preparedness	Management of Natural and Manmade Disasters	Study Tour - Exchange of visits by technical experts and delegations from both sides
		Disaster Management Strategy – Support the development of a comprehensive strategy for the management of disasters and training of specialists in the Sultanate in this field
3. Biodiversity Conservation and Improved Management of Protected Areas, and Other Ecologically Important Ecosystems	Protected Area Management	Protected Areas Management - Strengthen management of protected areas and implementation of new and/or existing management plans
		Curriculum Development – Develop and implement a natural resource management curriculum for the Ministry employees
		Conservation Fellowships – Support Omani participation in Conservation Fellowships
		Public Outreach – Support efforts of key nongovernmental organizations to educate and inform the public about protected areas management, endangered species conservation, and sustainable tourism
	CITES	CITES Implementation - Build on past cooperation to strengthen CITES implementation, and support civil society public awareness campaigns to promote endangered species conservation and reduce illegal trade in wildlife
	Sustainable Tourism	Sustainable Tourism Development - Support Oman's efforts to develop sustainable tourism to conserve unique natural and cultural resources and promote enhanced livelihoods. Focus on existing protected areas and other areas with significant biodiversity resources, working with protected areas officials, local communities and civil society
	Protection of Marine Species	By catch Reduction - Work with local fishermen to assess and reduce by catch of sea turtles in Oman
		Sea Turtle Protection – Continue to cooperate on endangered sea turtle protection through training, capacity building, research, addressing nesting beach management issues, and community awareness activities that work with local communities and civil society

Priority Area	Sub-area	Sub-activities/Details
4. Cleaner Production and Environmental Technology	Strengthening the Capacity of the Ministry of Environment and Climate Affairs	Cleaner Production – Develop and strengthen the ministry capacity with activities such as: (a) development of an electronic database on environmentally safe, clean production practices and techniques available in the world, (2) preparation of a draft for environmental laws and regulations, and (3) training of ministry personnel to specialize in this field
5. Environmental Education, Transparency and Public Participation in Environmental Issues		Enhancing Women’s Engagement in Environmental Issues – Pursue activities to increase women’s participation in environmental discussions, workshops and forums
		Public Participation Toolkit - Increase understanding and use of methods for public participation in environmental issues
		Joint Seminars - Invite the public to participate in technical-level Joint Seminars held on environmental issues

Benchmarks, Monitoring, and Evaluation

As the Joint Forum continues to further define cooperative programs, projects and activities, it will encourage implementing partners under the Plan of Action to identify performance indicators and benchmarks to measure the progress made in accomplishing or otherwise furthering the goals and objectives of such programs, projects and activities and to facilitate public reporting of such.

The Joint Forum intends to obtain and consider input from relevant local, regional and international organizations regarding relevant environmental conditions, indicators and views on the utility of cooperation under the Plan of Action. The Joint Forum also plans to encourage public participation in setting goals and implementing environmental collaboration, and to make information on activities carried out under the Plan of Action available to the public on a regular basis.

The Joint Forum recognizes that a variety of government agencies and civil society groups will be involved in implementing the programs and projects under this Plan of Action, and that the agency or group that leads implementation for a particular program or project will strive to be responsible for public participation, information disclosure, and performance tracking related to that program or project.